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Abstract:

If you are a teacher looking for a strategy on how to create good test questions look no further. Chapter 6 in *Fair Isn't Always Equal* provides a good start to making those test questions assess student learning rather than fill up the grade book with zeros. The critical points of the chapter stress using a variety of

questions rather than just one type (ex. multiple choice, true-false, open ended questions, etc.) Other [strategies](#) include avoiding negatives to prevent confusion in tests, have students write the answers twice so they have a copy of them after the test, and put some fun into the questions by using student names or real world issues. Like many of the other readings, Rick Wormeli encourages a wide spread of assessment rather than just a single test or big essay question. The most helpful form of assessment would be to have smaller tests spread throughout the semester.

Synthesis:

As a class, most of us picked up on differentiating tests to make it available to each student. The amount of panic that courses through students poor bodies at the prospect of a test might be just enough to blow up a small moon. Do teachers really need to add any fuel to that fire? Matt Potter disagrees, "Clear, concise test are essential for our students because, it will allow for [less stress, and confusion](#)." Tests should be something for students to show off their knowledge, understanding and mastery of the material covered in class. As teachers we want everyone to get A's and there should be no reason for us to help them along to a failing grade.

Tyler Michaud has become the star child of education with is comment: "The goal when assessing students is to gain insight into their level of mastery, it is not logical to create questions that could trip the students up with awkward wording, rather creating concise and clear questions will yield the most accurate results." No matter how fun it can be to trick children soon to be half our age, our goal as a teacher is to help them aspire to greatness. The Emperor from *Star Wars* tricked young Anakin on the Jedi test and it did not turn out so well. If we do not want to train a whole bunch of mini Vaders I think we should follow Tyler and Wormeli's example in creating clearly worded test questions.

On a final note, Ashley Godbout questions Wormeli's suggestion of using an answer sheet to make grading more efficient and use less paper. Though Ashley is disagreeing with the author, she is still actively following the role of a teacher to explore all methods of teaching. Wormeli, no matter the skill of his writing, could not convey the golden method of designing test questions. It is up to us as teachers and leaders to explore multiple methods and not just narrow our focus to one person's opinion.

Ashley Godbout

The book stresses how important it is to use a variety of question and prompt formats when creating test questions. The variety will be able to show student mastery more accurately because some students might perform better through one question while others will be successful given a different format. Writing in the T and F for true false questions for students to circle, putting matching questions on the same page and putting a maximum of eight, and highlighting key words like *not*, *least*, *most*, *three* are all examples of making tests more efficient for students. Before reading this chapter I wouldn't have thought of these things as important but the purpose of a test is for them to show what they know—nothing more. The more teachers can make things easier to understand or involve less writing, the more students can focus on answering the questions correctly. I liked the author's idea of spreading out the difficulty of the questions instead of clumping the challenging questions at the end. From experience, this is something that still stresses me out on tests. I spend so much time on the beginning and then realize I haven't even

gotten to the hard questions yet. I disagree with the author's idea of having students use an answer sheet to record their answers to make grading more efficient and use less paper. As a math teacher, it's valuable to see student work and thought process as to how they got to their answer. This is important for two reasons: so they can receive partial credit and so the teacher can correct where they went wrong in answering a question. Having an answer sheet is distracting and less efficient for the student.

Tyler Michaud

The sixth chapter of *Fair Isn't Always Equal*, by Rick Wormeli, focused on creating good test questions, these can include: multiple choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, or short essay. Although all of these options are available, as the teacher it is important to know when each is appropriate. Additionally, some other things to be mindful of when creating exams are word-choice and phrasing. The goal when assessing students is to gain insight into their level of mastery, it is not logical to create questions that could trip the students up with awkward wording, rather creating concise and clear questions will yield the most accurate results. When creating assessments, I think that it is important to be mindful of the different learning styles and to service as many as possible in each exam. Often teachers will throw a test at you that consists of two things, multiple choice questions and short answers; what about the people that are not linguistic or logical learners? What about the spatial learners? How about any of the other types of learners? Personally, I think that assessments can be misleading as they tend to be confined to sheets of paper; individualized projects are much more revealing. Unfortunately, in modern times assessments are all the rage. As a teacher, I know it will be my duty to service the students in a way that is mindful to both their individual learning styles and to the standardized assessments provided by the state. Hopefully, using the techniques explored in the text will help me develop testing that I consider fair.

Meghan Hughes

Students should not have to guess what the teacher is asking them. In order to assess students on their ability and knowledge, assessment questions need to be worded in a way that allow students to be successful and confident in their own abilities. Using a variety of prompts and assessments will allow for the students to be more confident in their abilities, and will also give the teacher a better understanding of what it is that the students feel they are good at, and what it is that they might need help with. Using a variety of questions and prompts will give the students a chance to be successful when doing assessments. "Forced choice" questions are questions in which the students must chose from answers, as opposed to students creating their own answer. Both types of questions should be included in every successful assessment. Giving students both types of questions will allow students to keep their minds active, by providing a variety of test formations. This will allow for the teacher to see what the students have mastered for information, and what areas their comfort levels may fall into in regards to assessment. Also, it is important to provide little room for unnecessary errors, such as providing "T's" and "F's" as opposed to allowing students to write their own letters as an answer. This will allow for students to be as successful as possible by providing them the opportunity to be successful.

Christopher Vogel

[illegible]

Matt Potter

As a teacher, when we create tests, we must keep a few things in mind. We want to create test, or assessments that are challenging but doable for our students. We must continue to differentiate as always, and give our students options. A good way to do this is to provide students with multiple questions that are geared toward different learning abilities, and allow our student to make choices. By making test of this fashion, students will have less confusion, our test will be more efficient, easier to grade, and will allow us to provide speedy return. Clear, concise test are essential for our students because, it will allow for less stress, and confusion. The more we can limit the anxiety of tests in our students, the more successful they will be.

As a teacher I will strive to create tests and assessments that are simple and clear for my students. I will make wording easy to understand, and directions will be easy to interpret. I don't want my students to feel like I do when taking some long grueling exams. I want them to be confident in their work, and not indecisive. I will provide bonus questions that may require extra, higher level thinking; this, as a bonus, won't be held against my students if they answer incorrectly. Students will not be intimidated by the bonus because they will understand that there is no penalty for a wrong answer.

Michael Diffin

Chapter six in FIAE is about whether a test question is good or effective or not and the development of the question. The first example in the book uses a question that consists of a great deal of answers that could be considered opinions of either the student or the teacher. A good question would be one that asked objectively about the material in a way that removes all biases. It is also a good idea on a test to use a large number of prompts and questions as to not berate them with the same question over and over again. It is also a good idea to use a great deal of non-traditional questions in your tests. The use of many types of questions is a good way to also determine if the student had actually learned the material or not. The use of many different types of questions is also a good way to differentiate and to appeal to all of the MI's. It is also important to make the tests productive for the students try and appeal to the skills they have. It is a good idea to remove questions that have negatives as the base of the question. Make essay questions clear, direct, and specific. The students do not know where to begin when the question is open ended or unclear.

Ashley Libby

This chapter emphasizes using multiple ways of creating tests and prompts. It stressed that there should be a variety of the traditional tests that include; true/false, matching, multiple choices, essay, short

answer, etc. There should also be a variety of nontraditional tests that include; drawings, analogies, demonstration/performance, integration of more than one topic, analyzing real-life applications, etc. Using this kind of a variety the teachers will get a better picture if the students are really mastering the subject content or not. If teachers use true/false questions, than there will always be the trouble trying to decipher the answer from those students that have a sloppy handing writing. The chapter suggests that with students in fifth grade to tenth grade should have an exception from the traditional multiple choice questions. Instead of using the words, “All of the above except C and E,” “Which of these is NOT associated with...,” “None of these” (78) because these type of questions do not actually assess if the students have mastery or not. As teachers we have to make sure the prompts we provide the students are clear. We have to make sure that the students know exactly what is expected of them in answering the question. It is pointless to have five questions that are all similar because teachers can see if the student truly understands in two or three questions. Timed tests are not a good way to see the mastery because it will just show how much they can cram into an hour or smaller time limit. I had no idea how much thought and effort must go into each test and assessment. It seems that most teachers just use the same traditional method but I know that if am constantly using different ways to test then I will have an effective classroom. I have to give my students chances to show me that they truly know the material but I have to help them along the way.

Cole Phillips

Creating tests, and creating tests well, are the focuses of Rick Wormeli in chapter six of *Fair Isn't Always Equal*. Designing a test is a long, intricate process, filled to the brim with options and variances that can be overwhelming, but which must be considered in order to best craft a test in accordance with the needs of a student. Whether through short answer, multiple choice, essay, true or false, or fill-in-the-blank methods, we must, as future educators, construct a test designed to truly account for mastery of content, and not for mastery of avoiding trickery. It is neither appropriate nor even moral to create an assessment designed to trip up students with awkward wording or inadvertent point making, and we must always consider the cogency and coherency of any assessment we may craft for these reasons. We must also consider exactly which type of assessment is best for specific types of learners. A student may falter with an essay question because of scale and room for creativity, and may excel at true or false style questions because of directness. For these reasons, we must ask ourselves whether or not it is even appropriate or effective to administer an assessment which is exactly the same for an entire class. In administration of differentiated assessment, though, we begin, as educators, to tread on the dangerous territory that is the question of, 'Are we fairly assessing every student?' Crafting a differentiated assessment is an art which pays careful attention to everyone, and which accommodates for learning styles, but is neither overly difficult nor overly easy for any one student because of testing style.

Tyler Brown

After reading this chapter, I realize that many educators over-look the importance of differentiating tests and making sure they do not contain bias or other flaws. Testing has always seems to be a concrete and non-evolving practice to me, but the ideas shared here are encouraging. The idea of providing multiple options for students throughout the course of the test is thoughtful, and only a couple of instructors in my educational experience have ever practiced this. Incorporating student's names into test questions and making the test unique to the classroom is great for developing positive relations with the students during

a time when they are likely to hate you. It also is likely to relax them and eliminate at least a small amount of the anxiety they might have about being evaluated. It is also important to be objective about the test and make sure that it is in line with what you have set for course goals of understanding and development. Failing to follow through with course goals at the point of summative assessment, where everything that has been learned is about to be portrayed, is arguably the worst time to make a mistake as an educator.

Russell Warren

In a similar vein to assessment tiering, and well suited under the umbrella of differentiation, is the intricate creation of test questions. It's important to use test questions to assess the students' knowledge and skill. Yes, multiple-choice assessments can show basic understanding and are good objective questions, but there is no way for the student to express the inner workings of their thought processes by making one choice out of five. I especially enjoyed the opening example, where the student's thought processes are written out, but as a teacher there would be no one to understand their thinking by just assigning a multiple choice test. I've experienced this thousands of times while being a student - making a quick choice hinders by thoughts, and I feel I could produce a much better answer by explaining my thoughts. That's why it's extremely necessary to differentiate tests. Students like me need essays and responses so we can articulate our thoughts and problems, and students who work best under a time crunch or despise writing paragraphs have their chance as well. Obviously it's important to include both, and other strategies like true/false, fill in the blanks, etc., but making a test totally differentiated and catering to every students isn't the right path either. There is a sweet middle ground, where the test allows for students to feel comfortable in their strongest learning style, but also tests test taking skills and builds on weaker areas.

Devin Boilard

Chapter 6: Creating Good Test Questions

"Test." The word has come to personify what is wrong with our education system, its link to short term memorization, student anxiety, and an often invalid reflection of learning, has left a bad taste in many mouths. The fact that testing has become synonymous with *No Child Left Behind* has not helped its cause. I must admit that prior to reading this chapter I had been fully convinced by the propaganda against tests. The unit that I have developed is completely void of any form of test; this is especially significant considering as a student I prefer test taking to any other mode of assessment, give me those short answer/multiple choice/true or false questions all day long. In my pursuit to make sure that my classroom is inclusive to all types of learners, not just those similar to me, I have overcompensated and limited the opportunities for those students like myself.

Chapter Six of *Fair Isn't Always Equal* reads as a great How-To on test creation, refocusing the view on tests while incorporating clever tricks of the trade. One of my favorite recommendations being to include student's names and hypothetical situations that include their interests or real life facts. I think this is a

clever idea to add much need humor and interest. While reading this chapter however I was not thinking about how I might use these skills and hints so much as how I am now more likely to never write my own test and rather follow in the steps of my in-field mentor. My first week in the placement I had a conversation with my mentor in which he detailed his process for incorporating tests into his unit, one which involves having the students create the questions. After writing numerous tests himself he was astonished at the time it took and amount of content review it entailed. Noting the rich process, he turned the test production over to the students. He noted that the students thought he was insane at first but the end product offered a much better opportunity to assess knowledge opposed to that of just an exam.

There is a bigger picture to be found in this chapter, much more than just cleaver tricks for formatting true or false questions, rather this chapter brings light to the fact that we as teachers need to adjust our intentions when creating a test. Historically the aim has been to trick or confuse the student, the thought being the more confusing the question the higher level of thinking it requires. In reality the more confusing the question the less accurate it is at reflecting knowledge of its answer. As teachers we need to be creating tests that work to help the students succeed, such tests are: short, formatted for efficient grading, tiered, and state questions that are simply worded while still being authentic to instruction. Much like with rubrics, test creating is an art, some are better than others but there is no perfect test, you should however be constantly refining yours to get it to that point.
